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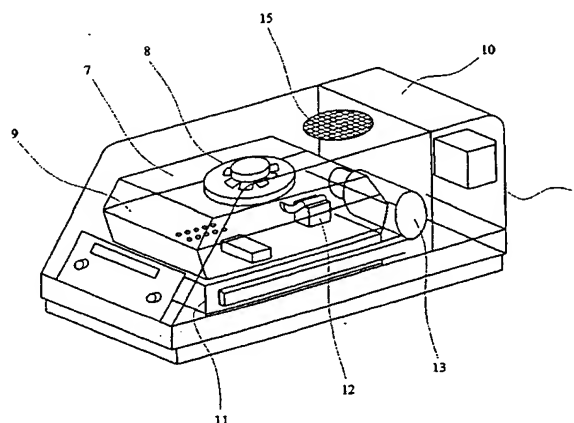
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(54) Title: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR PRINTING AN IMAGE ONTO A 3-DIMENSIONAL SURFACE



(57) Abstract: A printing apparatus (1) for printing an image onto a 3-dimensional surface of a plastics article such as a mobile telephone or computer mouse (not shown) has a housing (2) having a slot (3) for receiving a drawer (4) for receiving one of more of the articles to be printed. The drawer (4) is provided with clamp release buttons (5) on a front surface (6) thereof. The housing (2) contains a heater box (7), located above the slot (3), and having a fan (8) for directing hot air through a separator plate (9) onto a transfer element (not shown) mounted on the top of drawer (4) over the article on which an image is to be printed. The transfer element has a support layer of metallised amorphous polyethylene terephthalate (APET) having an aqueous coating of polyvinyl polymers, which may also contain synthetic silica, surfactants and optical brightening agents. The metallisation is formed by applying one or more metallic coatings to one side of the APET film during manufacture. The heater box (7) is provided with a heater (not shown) which is controlled by means of an electrical enclosure (10) containing a programmable logic controller (PLC) and heating controller.

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